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The Man From Brodney's

By GEORGE BARR
M'CUTCHEON

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"If I were you," he said at last, "I wouldn't sit up there. It would be a very simple matter for one of our friends to pick you off with a shot from below. Please let me pull up a chair for you."

She smiled ingenuously, without a trace of uneasiness in her manner. "Dear officer of the day, do you think they are so foolish as to pick us off in parties? Not at all. They will dispose of us wholesale, not by the piece. By the way, has Neenah been made quite comfortable?"

"I believe so. She and Selim have the room beyond mine, thanks to Lady Deppingham."

"Agnes tells me that she is very interesting—quite like a princess out of a fairy book. You recall the princesses who were always being captured by ogres and evil princes and afterward satisfactorily rescued by those dear knights admirable? Did Selim steal her in the beginning?"

"You forget the pot of sapphires and the big ruby."

"They say that princesses can be bought very cheaply."

"Depends entirely upon the quality of princess you desire. It's very much like buying rare gems or old paintings. I'd say. Speaking of princesses and ogres, has it occurred to you that you would bring a fortune in the market?"

"Mr. Chase!"

"You know, it's barely possible that you may be put in a matrimonial shop window if Von Blitz and his friends should capture you alive. Ever think of that?"

"Good heavens! You—why, what a horrible thing to say!"

"You won't bring as much in the south sea market as you would in Rapp-Thorberg or Paris, but I dare say you could be sold for."

"Please, Mr. Chase, don't suggest anything so atrocious," she cried, something like terror in her voice.

"Neenah's father sold her for a handful of gems," he said, with distinct meaning in his voice. She was silent, and he went on after a moment. "Is there so much difference, after all, where one is sold, just so long as the price is satisfactory to all concerned?"

"You are very unkind, Mr. Chase," she said with quiet dignity. "I do not deserve your sarcasm."

"I humbly plead for forgiveness," he said, suddenly contrite. "It was beastly."

"American wit, I imagine you call it," she said scornfully. "I don't care to talk with you any longer."

"Won't you forgive me? I'm a poor brute—don't lash me. In two or three weeks I'll step down and out of your life; that will be penalty enough, don't you think?"

"For whom?" she asked in a voice so low that he could scarcely hear the words. Then she laughed ironically.

"I do forgive. It is all that a prince or a princess is ever asked to do, I'm beginning to believe. I also forgive you for coming into my life."

"If I had been a trifle more intelligent I should not have come into it at all," he said. She turned upon him quickly, stung by the remark.

"Is that the way you feel about it?" she asked sharply.

"I don't understand. A man of intelligence would never have kicked Prince Karl. As a matter of fact, in trying to kick Prince Karl out of your life I kicked myself into it. A very simple process, and yet scarcely intellectual. A jackass could have done as much."

"A jackass may kick at a king," she paraphrased casually. "A cat may only look at him. But let us go back to realities. Do you mean to tell me that they—these wretches—would dare to sell me—us, I mean—into the kind of slavery you mention?"

"Why not?" he asked soberly, arising and coming quite close to her side. "You are beautiful. If they should take you alive it would be a very simple matter for any one of these men to purchase you from the others. You might easily be kept on this island for the rest of your days and the world would be none the wiser, or you could be sold into Persia or Arabia or Turkey. I am not surprised that you shudder. Von Blitz and Rasula mean to destroy all of us. We are to disappear from the face of the earth. When our friends come to look for us we will have died from the plague and our bodies will have been burned, as they always are in Japan. There will be no one left to deny the story. After tomorrow the ship is due to put in here for three weeks. They will see to it that none of us get out to that ship, nor will the ship's officers know of our peril. The word will go forth that the plague has come to the island. That is the first step, your highness. But there is one obstacle they have overlooked," he concluded. She looked up inquiringly.

"My warships," he said, the whimsical smile broadening.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PLAGUE IS ANNOUNCED.

THE next morning a steamship flying the English flag came to anchor off Ararat, delivered and received mail bags and after an hour's stay steamed away in the drift of the southeast trade winds—Bombay to Cape Colony. The men at the chateau gazed longingly, helplessly through their glasses at this

black hulled visitor from the world they loved. They watched it until the faint cloud of smoke that went to a pin point in the horizon. There had been absolutely no opportunity to communicate with the officers of the ship.

They sailed away hurriedly, as if in alarm. Their haste was significant.

"Perhaps Bowles succeeded in getting a word with the officer who came ashore," said Browne hopefully. "He knows the danger we are in."

"My dear Browne, Bowles hadn't the ghost of a chance to communicate with the ship," said Chase. "He can't bully 'em any longer with his Tommy Atkins coat. They've outgrown it, just as he has. It was splendid while it lasted, but they're no more afraid of it now than they are of my warships. I wish there was some way to get him and his English assistants into the chateau. It's awful to think of what is coming to them sooner or later."

"Is there no way to help them?" groaned Deppingham.

"I'll never forget poor Bowles the first time I saw him in his dinky red jacket and that hooligan cap of his," reflected Chase, as if he had not heard Deppingham's remark. "He put them on and tried to overawe the crowd that night when I was threatened in the market place. He did his best, poor chap, and I—"

"Look!" exclaimed Britt suddenly, pointing toward one of the big gates in the upper end of the park. "I believe they're making an attack!"

The next instant the men in the balcony were leaving it pellmell, picking up the ever ready rifles as they dashed off through the halls and out into the park. They kept themselves as well covered as possible by the boxed trees, although up to this time there had been no shooting.

Chase, in advance, suddenly gave vent to a loud cry and boldly dashed out into the open, disregarding all shelter. Two of the native patrol were hastening toward the gate from another direction. Outside the huge, barred gate a throng of men and women were congregated. Some of the men were vigorously slashing away at the bars with sledges and crowbars; others were crouching with rifles leveled—in the other direction!

"It's Bowles!" shouted Chase eagerly. The situation at once became clear to those inside the walls. Bowles and his friends, a score all told, had managed to reach the upper gate and were now clamoring for admission, beset on all sides by the enemy's pickets.

"For God's sake, be quick!" shouted Bowles. "There's a throng of them coming up the mines road!"

The gates were unlocked by the patrol, and the panic stricken throng tumbled through them and scattered like sheep behind the high, sheltering walls. Once more the massive gates were closed and the bolts thrown down just in time to avoid a fusillade of bullets from the outside.

Once inside the chateau the fugitives, shivering with terror, fairly collapsed. There were three Englishmen in the party besides Bowles, and Chase recognized the Persian wives of Jacob von Blitz among the women who had been obliged to cast their lot with the refugees from Ararat. The sister of Neenah and five or six other women who had been sold into the island made up the remainder of the little group of trembling females.

The remainder of the men in the party, fourteen or fifteen in all, were of many castes and nationalities and of various ages. There were brown skinned fellows from Calcutta, a couple of sturdy Greeks, an Egyptian and a Persian, three or four Assyrians and as many Maoris. As to their walks in life, among them were clerks and gentry, a native constabulary, Indian fakirs and showmen and vendors of foreign gewgaws.

Bowles, his thin legs still shaking perceptibly, although he strove mightily to hold them at strict "attention," was the spokesman. A valiant heart thumped once more against the seams of the little red jacket. If his legs trembled and his voice shook it was because of the unwonted exertion to which both had been put in that stirring flight at dawn.

"For some time we have been preparing for the outbreak," he said, fingering the glass of brandy that Britt had poured for him. "Ever since Chase began to go in so noticeably for the ladies—ahem!"

Chase glared at him. The others tittered.

"I don't mean the old story, sir, of the Persians, and I'm saying, sir, what's more, there wasn't a word of truth in it—I mean the ladies of the chateau, begging pardon too. Von Blitz came to me often with complaints that you were being made a fool of by a pretty face or two and that you were going over to the enemy body and soul. When I heard that they tried to kill you the night before last I made up my mind that no white man was to be left to tell the tale. Last night we looked all the company's books in the vaults, got together all the bank notes and gold we had on hand and made preparations to go on board the steamer when she called this morning. My plan was to tell them of the trouble here and try to save you. We were all expected to die of the plague—that's what we were—and I realized that Tommy Atkins was off

the boards forever.

"We hadn't any more than got the cash and valuables ready to smuggle aboard when down came Rasula upon us—10 o'clock last night, your lordship. He had a dozen men with him, and he told every mother's son of us that our presence in the town was not desired until after the ship had sailed away. We were taken up into the hills by a squad of men. There wasn't a man among us that didn't know that we were to be killed as soon as the ship had gone. With our own eyes we saw the mail bags rifled and nearly all of the mail destroyed. The pouches from the chateau were burned. Rasula politely informed us that the plague had broken out among the chateau servants and that no mail could be sent out from that place. He said he intended to warn the ship's officer of the danger in landing, and—well, that explains the short stay of the ship and the absence of nearly all mail from the island. There won't be another boat for three weeks, and they won't land because of the plague. They will get word, however, that every one in the chateau has died of the disease and that scores of natives are dying every day."

"Well, we decided to break away from the guard and try to get to the steamer. It was their intention to take some of us back to the bank this morning to open the vault and the safes. That was to be our last act, I fancy. About 4 this morning a dozen of the women came up to where we were being held. They were flying from the town and ran into the arms of our guard before they knew of their presence. It seems that those devils down their had set out to kill their women because it was known that one of them had warned Mr. Chase of his danger. During the excitement brought about by their arrival in our camp we made a sudden attack upon our guards. They were not expecting it, and we had seized their rifles before they could recover from their surprise. I regret to say that we were obliged to kill a few of them in the row that followed. You let us in just in time. My word, it was a close shave."

"It's an ill wind that blows all evil," said Deppingham. "Mr. Bowles, you are welcome. We are a bit short of

able-bodied soldiers. May we count on you and the men who came with you?"

"To the end, my lord," said Deppingham, almost bursting his jacket by inflation. The others slapped their legs stanchly.

The arrival of the refugees from Ararat put the chateau a stanch little garrison of sixty men.

"For the time being we are as snug as bugs in a rug," said Deppingham when all was over. "Shall we rejoin the ladies, gentlemen?" He was as calm as a May morning.

The three leaders found the ladies in the shaded balcony, lounging lazily, as if no such thing as danger existed. Below them in the grassy courtyard a dozen indolent Persians were congregated, lying about in the shade with all the abandon of absolute security. The three women in the balcony had been watching them for an hour, commenting freely upon these creatures from another world. Neenah, the youngest and prettiest of them all, had waived kisses to the proud dames above. She had danced for their amusement.

Lady Agnes waved her hand lazily toward the group below, sending a mocking smile to Chase. "The Asiatic plague," she said cheerfully.

"The deuce!" broke in her husband, not catching her meaning. "Has it really broken out?"

"Deputy, you are the dumbest creature I know!" exclaimed his wife.

Chase smiled broadly. "She refers to the newly acquired harem, Lord Deppingham. We're supposed to die with the Asiatic plague, not to—"

"Not to live with it! Ho, ho, I'm by Jove!" roared Deppingham amiably. "Splendid! Harem! I get the point. Ripping!"

"They're not so bad, are they, Bobby?" asked Lady Agnes coolly, going to Browne's side at the railing. It may not have been true that Browne was in love with Lady Deppingham, but it was more than evident that his wife felt convinced that he was.

(To be Continued.)

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